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### **Schleiermacher: A Guide for the Perplexed (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), by Theodore Vial**

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**SCHLEIERMACHER: A GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED.** By Theodore Vial. London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013. Pp. ix + 150. Cloth, \$80.00; paper, \$24.95.

This book is an extraordinarily clear guide to Schleiermacher's thought. Faulting other introductions for concentrating almost exclusively on Schleiermacher as the Father of Modern Theology, Vial sets Schleiermacher's many intellectual contributions in a broader context, walking the reader through the additional fields of hermeneutics, religious studies, and politics. The discussion of Schleiermacher as a religious theorist reflects recent revisionary scholarship, which seeks to dispel the view that Schleiermacher's famous "intuition of the infinite" and "feeling of absolute dependence" entailed a flight from Kantian critiques (the dominant reading reinforced by Eliade, W. Proudfoot, and others). Instead, the reappraisal contends, Schleiermacher sought to give an account of religion that was "natural, social, and historical." When exploring the *Speeches* and *The Christian Faith*, Schleiermacher's most familiar texts, Vial focuses on new readings of the second and fourth speech and, in broad strokes, the doctrines of Christology, sin, and redemption, though one wishes for a somewhat fuller treatment of Schleiermacher's significance in the history of theology. The chapter on Schleiermacher's political thought is particularly insightful. Though taking a stand on controversial questions, Vial remains sensitive to Schleiermacher's complexity and offers solid evidence for his interpretative choices. Behind the accessible prose there is a great depth of learning and a very firm grasp of English and German sources. Even senior

scholars of Schleiermacher will find this excellent book an immense help. It should become standard fare for undergraduates, beginning graduate students, seminarians, and other students of modern theology, philosophy, and religion, and is highly recommended.

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